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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000503

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CU](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: CUBANS, SPANISH PREPARE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MEETING

REF: A. MADRID 862

[1](#)B. HAVANA 488

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Buddy Williams; Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Spanish Embassy in Havana says that next week's Spain-Cuba Human Rights consultations will be a step in the right direction, and that all issues are in play. Spanish MFA representative Dezcallar will see GOC officials, but not any dissidents. Spanish Embassy is reaching out to civil society in advance of the visit, but is forced to deal with the hard feelings caused by FonMin Moratinos' early April visit and snubbing of the opposition. We told the Spanish we were pessimistic they would get significant results from the consultations; but urged them to shoot for much more than haggling over a short list of political prisoners to be freed. Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR) and Vladimiro Roca expressed to us their skepticism over the visit; Oswaldo Paya has tried to communicate messages to the Spanish government indirectly to steer the talks into productive territory. Separately, these three dissidents have collaborated on a text to the European Commission in advance of EU discussion of its common position on Cuba. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) USINT Officers on May 22 called on Spanish Pol Counselor Perez-Desoy to ask about plans for the visit May 28-29 of a delegation headed by Rene Dezcallar, who Perez-Desoy said was a DirGen equivalent. We asked if Dezcallar would see representatives of the democratic opposition. Answer: No, but the embassy was reaching out to dissidents this week to "obtain inputs." So far, only Cuesta Morua (Note: relatively insignificant) had come in to talk. Martha Beatriz Roque told us May 23 that she had played phone tag with the Spanish and said to them she would accept their visiting her home, but she would not go to their chancery. Perez-Desoy acknowledged that FonMin Moratinos' unwillingness to meet with dissident leaders in April made it much harder to do so now.

[1](#)3. (C) Everything on the Table: Pol-Econ Counselor asked his Spanish counterpart if Dezcallar would be able to raise Cuba domestic human rights issues, which Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque had excluded from the consultations at his and Moratinos' joint press conference in April. In that press conference, Perez Roque had referred to the domestic opposition as "mercenaries on the payroll of the USG," and

said no matters could be raised that interfered in Cuba's internal affairs. According to Perez-Desoy it was a big mistake to have proceeded with that press conference, since both sides had agreed in private to hold open-ended human rights consultations. Perez-Desoy had no illusions that the current GOC was in a frame of mind to be flexible on human rights, but suggested that next week's meeting was worthwhile just to take a first step in the right direction.

14. (C) USINT Officers expressed our skepticism about the possibility of gaining anything significant from the GOC--noting that so many political leaders had come to Havana in the past thinking they could achieve reform by dialogue and failed. That said, we told Perez-Desoy we hoped the Spanish delegation would aim for results that mattered, and not claim victory if it haggled over a few names on a list of prisoners and got some of them released. We would view that as a failure if the GOC did not change its laws that permitted arrest of Cubans for free speech in the first place. Perez-Desoy took the point, and said one agenda item might be ending the death penalty in Cuba. He did not expect this to get anywhere, but argued that it was important to put it on the table.

15. (C) As we reported in Ref B, Oswaldo Paya is contacting Spanish parliamentarians behind the scenes to urge them to push Dezcallar into insisting upon full recognition of the democratic opposition as a bona-fide interlocutor to negotiate Cuba's future. Paya also said he wanted to avoid Dezcallar falling into a trap negotiating a list of prisoners to be released. "They should present a formula that calls for release of all prisoners of conscience," he said. Dissident Vladimiro Roca told Pol-Econ Counselor May 23 that he was pessimistic regarding the Spanish consultations. In his view it would be more honest to state outright that the Spanish want to protect their investments in Cuba and dispense with the cover story about discussing human rights.

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"We know that you will soon meet to discuss Cuba. Recent events, beginning with the visit by Spanish FonMin Moratinos, force us to reiterate the dissident movement's position in Cuba.

It is up to Cubans, and only Cubans, to achieve a transition to democracy. However, those that struggle peacefully to obtain freedom need the support of democratic peoples and governments around the world -- in particular the EU -- which truly respect human rights, without negotiating or making deals with the totalitarian regime which violates them.

Our most urgent demand is the unconditional release from prison of all political prisoners, who suffer, many of them, long sentences, and are the object of constant slander and pressure by a dictatorship that doesn't even recognize the injustice of their imprisonment. Similarly, it is necessary that the regime cease its harassment of the dissident movement.

Distinguished members of the European Commission, we hope that you reach a consensus to obtain a common position, which condemns the lack of democracy in Cuba, and enables support for those who struggle peacefully to obtain all the rights due to any human beings.

Respectfully, from those who are United for Liberty; we proclaim these principles and objectives."

16. (C) Comment: It is hard for us to imagine an outcome from next week's consultations that advances any of the core human rights and democratization issues in Cuba. When CODEL Flake/Delahunt visited here last December, they witnessed the same arrogance that Perez-Roque displayed in his April press conference with Moratinos: "We don't have to discuss any of our internal affairs with anybody." On the other hand, both Cuba and Spain will be cognizant of the need to show the rest

of the EU that Moratinos' soft, friendly approach to Cuba gets results -- so it is likely they WILL haggle over lists of political prisoners, and maybe even get some of them released.

WILLIAMS